

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

### OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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June 27, 2003

Jeff Staser  
Federal Co-Chair  
Denali Commission  
510 L Street, Suite 410  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Mr. Staser:

Enclosed is our White Paper on "The Potential of Expanding the Denali Commission Primary Care Program to Other Types of Health Care Facilities."

The White Paper makes a compelling case for continued Commission funding of primary care facilities. The Commission and its program partners have made great strides in addressing unmet needs, but much more remains to be done. The Department supports the Health Steering Committee recommendation of February 19, 2003 to stay the course with primary care facilities through federal fiscal year 2004, and further supports the Steering Committee recommendations to expand the Commission's health facility program through the addition of dedicated behavioral health and dental service space in "small" primary care clinics.

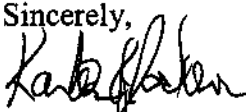
By the same token, the department respects the Congressional intent of July 22, 2003 of the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill stating that "The Committee expects the Denali Commission to allocate funds to a mix of rural hospital, clinic, long-term care and social service facilities, rather than focusing exclusively on clinic funding." The department is very appreciative of the recent opportunity to advise the Commission on the distribution of the funds allocated for non-clinic health care facilities by this Congressional intent. The department's recommendations were provided on the basis of the best information obtainable over a short period of time. Assuming that similar Congressional intent may well be forthcoming in future years, the department would be pleased to work with the Commission to develop a more rigorous process for allocating these funds.

The department also notes the urgent need for expanding residential behavioral health programs for youth in rural Alaska. The department would welcome an opportunity to collaborate with the Commission and tribal health agencies in this regard.

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The department commends the Commission for their ongoing commitment to improved health care for Alaskans.

Sincerely,

  
for Joel Gilbertson  
Commissioner

Enclosure